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Date: 6/10/2014

GAIN Report Number: RO1406

Romania

Post: Bucharest

US Experience in Bovine genetics shared with Romanian farmers

Report Categories:

Dairy and Products Livestock and Products

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Report Highlights:

In April 2014, FAS Bucharest in partnership with the US Livestock Genetics Export Association (USLGE) and the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture organized a seminar focused on the role of high-quality genetics and feeding in cattle. Three US experts captured the attention of an audience of 150 participants with the recent changes in the genetic evaluation system for U.S. dairy cattle, importance of forage quality in dairy diets, breeding, reproduction and management guidelines for beef calf/cow operations. This report provides a description of the program carried out in Romania.

General Information:

Activity Code and name: W201202

Beginning/Ending Dates: April 16-17, 2014

City/Country: Bucharest - Romania

Purpose and description of the activity

The goals of these activities were to highlight the role of high-quality genetics in cattle sector development and emphasize the need of good feeding practices for ensuring progress in cow productivity.

The regional activity contained two components:

- In April 2014 one day seminar (two half day seminars each focused on dairy and beef and production) to be conducted in Romania for producers, breeder associations and government agencies involved in this area on latest developments in U.S. livestock sector, from genetics to herd management including information on new breeding techniques and strength of U.S. breeds.
- One government official would travel to the United States to engage U.S. government and industry officials on the U.S. system, review it in practice through farm visits, and, depending on timing, attend an event where superior genetics are on demonstration for direct comparisons.

Dairy and Beef Seminar, April 16, 2014

On April 16, 2014, FAS Bucharest in partnership with the US Livestock Genetics Export (USLGE) conducted a seminar focused on the role of high-quality genetics and feeding in cattle in Bucharest, Romania. The presentations delivered by the three US experts in front of an audience of almost 150 participants captured the attention of the participants with the recent changes in the genetic evaluation system for U.S. dairy cattle, importance of forage quality in dairy diets, breeding, reproduction and management guidelines for beef calf/cow operations. Ministry of Agriculture, through its National Agency for Animal Improvement and Reproduction, was the co-organizer of the seminar hosting the event in its brand new conference venue.

Audience for seminar included farmers – medium and large, breeders associations, genetics suppliers, representatives of bovine research institutes, professors, feed ingredients suppliers, representatives of local Government authorities with responsibilities in livestock improvement, and representatives of Ministry of Agriculture and the Romanian Parliament. All topics were well received by the participants, judging from the live debates ignited by these themes and the number of questions addressed to the US speakers.

The first section of the seminar was dedicated to Dairy cattle. **Dr. Martin Sieber**, USLGE consultant, gave participants an overview on the US dairy industry in terms of number of animals, breeds and

market structure. Further, the speaker introduced the participants into the genomics topic, explaining the advantages of new technology versus the traditional evaluation methods, the rate of expansion in the dairy industry and the genomic reliability by breed. Questions from the audience were related to the impact that genomic evaluation has on the classical evaluation methods and percentage of genomic bulls in total bulls used in artificial insemination in the United States.

Professor Robert Kaiser from the Dairy Science Department, University of Wisconsin – Madison, delivered a presentation on Importance of Forage Quality in Dairy Diets. Further questions from participants were related to the harvesting moment of alfalfa, alfalfa moisture percentage before being placed for silage, corn silage versus alfalfa silage, the level of feeding concentrates in the feed ratio. In addition to these details, participants were provided with links to other in-depths analysis reports developed by Wisconsin Team Forage.

The second session was dedicated to nutrition and management of beef cow herd. **Professor Scott**Jensen provided the audience with the latest developments in the US Beef industry, breeds, beef market structure and beef cow farm organization. Best management practices for cow/calf operations, advantages to artificial insemination in beef cattle and its impact on the end product quality were very much appreciated by the audience.

In his second presentation, Professor Robert Kaiser spoke about the nutrient requirements for beef-cow according to each production phase, alignment of calving with the forage nutrient supply and the utilization of the Body Condition Score (BCS) indicator. Although the number of the farms working with purely beef breeds was not significant, participants' interest for the topic was remarkable. Participants were interested in hearing about any restriction imposed in the United States in the number of Angus animals per acre, animal welfare concerns in the United States, consumers' perceptions on the beef meat originating from different breeds and price variations according to the breed. At the end of the seminar, participants received certificates of participation signed by the Agricultural Counsellor, Michael Henney and the General Director of the National Authority for Animal Improvement, Vasile Bacila.





US speakers, USLGE, delivering presentations on genetic evaluation and cow/calf operation





Audience addressing questions to speakers

Round-table on bovine genetic resources, April 17, 2014

Apart from the seminar, the Ministry of Agriculture hosted on April 17 a round-table focused on the role of high-quality genetics in the cattle sector improvement. The round-table was opened by the Secretary of State Tamas Nagy, in charge with Livestock Policies, and the FAS Agricultural Counselor, Michael Henney.

Secretary of State Nagy emphasized the weight that the Romanian Government places on the livestock sector, translated into setting the cattle sector as a priority for funding. He also mentioned that there is a noticeable interest in genetics, with a new orientation towards beef breeds in the less-favored areas. He admitted that despite the progress made in the cattle improvement area, there is still titanic work to be done, which requires full-engagement from Romanian Government and farmers in terms of the level of financial incentives and farmers' organization.

As a participant in the program, the representative of the Sanitary-Veterinary and Food Safety National Authority shared with the audience the impressions gathered during the training session attended in the United States (March 2014). Being a veterinarian as background, he was very satisfied with the meetings organized at USDA/APHIS level, either face-to face or through conference calls. Having the opportunity to explore the organizational structure of the breeding associations, their goals and evolution over time, was an extremely useful experience.

In his closing remarks, FAS Bucharest Agricultural Counsellor emphasized the importance of creating a non- restrictive framework for farmers and breeders which would ensure a fair playing field for all market players. The recent draft proposed by the Chamber of Deputies raised concerns among the US genetics exporters to Romania. The draft itself is intended to be a general framework for livestock breeding and species conservation, but the draft also creates restrictions for the genetics suppliers/farmers in marketing/using genetics on the Romanian market, over-empowering the animal breeders associations. The round-table was viewed as an opportunity to strengthen the US-RO relationship in the field of animal genetics, with emphasis on high-quality genetics and new technologies available for improving the cattle herd.

The round-table was followed in the afternoon by a visit of the U.S. experts to a local modern dairy farm using US genetics, Ilya Agro. That was a great opportunity to review with the farm manager the theoretical principles discussed during the seminar the previous day regarding herd management and genetics. The group exchanged with the farm manager ideas about the ventilation system, feed composition and hay harvesting best practices. The farm owner very enthusiastically shared with the visitors the story of beginning the relationship with the importer of US genetics, being very proud with the positive results achieved in his dairy farm. After passing through all the production phases, the tour ended in the milking room, observing and grading the cows' body conditions.

Results and Outcomes:

FAS Office believes that such outreach activities contribute to raising farmers' interest for US high-quality genetics and make them aware about the role investments in genetic resources play in improving a herd. Below are listed few outcomes achieved on a short-term, or to be achieved in medium and long-run:

Enhance the dialogue about the local dairy market structure: Considering the diverse composition of the audience (farmers, breeders associations, genetics importers, representatives of bovine research institutes, professors etc.), FAS Bucharest believes that having US speakers describe the dairy market structure in the United States made farmers reflect over new technologies applied already with positive results in cattle development elsewhere. Therefore, we envisage an intensification of the interaction

between the US genetic suppliers, on one side, and farmers/breeders associations, on the other side.

US genetics exports expand to Romania - United States ranks second in the hierarchy of frozen semen foreign suppliers on the Romanian market in terms of value. In 2013, the US genetics export value reached USD 145,000, which is a double figure compared to the previous year. The US performance in 2013 is remarkable, given the fierce competition which characterizes the local genetics market (Belgium, Germany, Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland). In 2013, total bovine semen imports value climbed to USD 971,000, which is 24 percent higher compared to the previous year. Assuming the market remains open and attractive to US genetics suppliers, the US exports are likely to grow by 50 – 75 percent in the following 2-3 years in value.

Romania adopts a transparent legal framework in the form of Animal Husbandry Law that facilitates harmonization of the interests of genetics suppliers, farmers and public authorities, consolidating the cooperation among all key-players.

Romanian farmers embrace genomics – As of 2013, Romanian regulators understood the advantages offered by the bulls genomically tested and approved their import and utilization in Romania. The US speaker underlined the time-savings offered by genomics in predicting young bulls and cows with better accuracy and improving the relationships between the relatives. As farmers become more knowledgeable about its values, the number of farmers embracing genomics is expected to rise.

Among the quantitative indicators reached, we can list:

Number of event attendees – In total, almost 150 participants attended the Dairy/Beef seminar hosted in Bucharest consisting of farmers, researchers, academic, local Government officials, members of Parliament and agricultural media.

<u>Number of contacts made during the events</u> – FAS Bucharest and the USLGE experts were able to meet a significant number of contacts among farmers, regulators and researchers during these sessions.

<u>Number of media representatives attending the event</u> – Although focused on a narrow agricultural topic, the seminar was well-attended by the specialized agricultural media, including the public national TV channel TVR 1.

Media coverage of the event - The seminar has been and continues to be featured in several specialized agricultural media outlets. The national public television channel "TVR 1" "Viata Satului/Rural Life", with a viewership 150,000, carried over two weekly editions images from the seminar (5 minutes in the first edition and 15 minutes in the second). The event was also featured in the social media, on the Facebook page of the US Embassy. Links to all stories published about the event are included in Appendix.

Recommendations/Follow-up

FAS Bucharest appreciated the opportunity to utilize EMP funds as an instrument in addressing some of the concerns in this market. Combination of the US study-tour with the seminar organized locally drove

farmers' attention towards US-sourced genetic resources and developments in this sector. In order to consolidate the relationship created and in order to preserve the interest of local farmers for US genetics in the context of a very competitive environment, it is recommended that such outreach activities would continue.

Appendix - List of TV broadcasts and published articles TV Broadcast:

TV national public channel - agricultural show

http://www.tvrplus.ro//editie-viata-satului-211634 (minutes 1.34 through 5:20) http://www.tvrplus.ro//editie-viata-satului-216701 (minutes 43:25 through 56:00)

On-line:

http://www.recolta.eu/zootehnie/bovine/michael-t-henney-usda-cu-resursele-actuale-romania-ar-putea-merge-inainte-in-sectorul-zootehnic-urmand-modelul-american-24964.html

http://www.recolta.eu/zootehnie/bovine/martin-sieber-agdevelop-america-de-nord-pierde-anual-intre-2-500-i-2-700-de-efective-bovine-anual-24972.html

http://www.agroinfo.ro/cresterea-animalelor/vaci/evenimente/seminar-cresterea-taurinelor-pentru-productia-de-lapte-carne-prezent-si-perspective

http://www.bovismagazin.com/component/content/article/20-bovisnews/383-cresterea-taurinelor-pentru-productia-de-lapte-prezent-si-perspective-in-ameliorare-si-reproductie

http://www.agro-business.ro/americanii-nu-mai-cresc-rase-mixte-de-vaci/2014/05/16/

http://paginadeagricultura.ro/americanii-ne-aduc-din-experienta-lor-in-cresterea-si-nutritia-taurinelor/

http://www.gazetadeagricultura.info/targuri-expozitii/615-intalniri-si-conferinte/15874-crestereataurinelor-pentru-productia-de-lapte-carne-prezent-si-perspective-in-ameliorare-si-nutritie.html

http://www.fabricadecarne.ro/comunicari-stiintifice-romano-americane-pe-tema-tehnologiilor-de-ferma-pentru-vacile-de-carne

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